

MESA - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today honored Francisco "Cisco" Preciado and re-presented him with the prestigious Star of Life award for his meritorious EMT service to Southwest Ambulance, headquartered within Mitchell's congressional district. Preciado earned the Star of Life medal last year for his overall outstanding performance as an EMT.

The "Star of Life" is a national award to recognize the country's most outstanding Paramedics and EMTs. Preciado, a military veteran, was one of only three in Arizona to receive the award in 2009.

"I am humbled to be re-presenting Cisco with the Star of Life medal today," said Mitchell. "His touching story of selfless action and friendship inspires all of us, and I know Southwest Ambulance, as well as myself, have a great deal of respect for him. I am honored to represent such a strong and caring company in Congress, and honored to present Cisco with the award."

Preciado, as a tribute to fellow EMT, Mark Vernick, who passed away last year, placed his medal inside Vernick's casket at his funeral. Vernick was killed on his way home from work this January in a motorcycle collision. Preciado did not think that anyone saw him give his friend and co-worker his medal, but his co-workers did notice and were extremely touched. Southwest Ambulance, without Preciado's knowledge, contacted the American Ambulance Association, who agreed to send a replacement medal.

Mitchell met Preciado previously in Washington, D.C. as part of an EMS Day on the Hill program. Preciado joined Southwest Ambulance as a Paramedic in 2005, after serving for eight years with the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coastguard.

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